

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman
Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 26, 2018

Dear Senators,

As you continue to investigate the allegations of sexual assault and misconduct against Judge Brett Kavanaugh, we urge you to conduct this process with sensitivity, dignity, and a focus on ascertaining the truth. The public, through their elected representatives, has a right to evaluate the credentials and the character of a Supreme Court nominee. At the same time, this is also an intensely personal matter. Just as when dealing with any trauma survivor, we urge you to consult with experts and employ a trauma-informed approach when questioning Dr. Christine Blasey Ford – or any other survivor or witness for that matter – about her allegations against Judge Kavanaugh. This is a time to demonstrate leadership and what Congress has learned over past decades about how to support victims and empower survivors.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMSHA) describes trauma-informed approach as one that:

1. *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understand the potential paths for recovery from that trauma;
2. *Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma
3. *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
4. *Seeks* to actively resist *re-traumatization*.

To that end, we urge the Committee to ensure that Dr. Ford is comfortable with the details surrounding the hearing, including the time and location in which it is held and those that are in attendance. As she speaks about painful and personal subjects, she should be able to take breaks as needed and be permitted to seat her supporters in immediate proximity. She must fully understand the process of the hearing in advance and most importantly, Committee Members must conduct themselves in a way that respects Dr. Ford and her experience. Any question, statement, or committee policy that, intentionally or not, intimidates or belittles Dr. Ford would reflect poorly on Congress and the integrity of the judicial nomination process.

Taking such an approach is not only imperative to the wellbeing of Dr. Ford, but given the national attention Thursday's hearing will draw, it would send a powerful message to millions of survivors across the United States. Even in the #MeToo era, many are still suffering in silence

after experiencing vicious attacks and assaults. They fear that if they come forward, those they tell will not care or would dismiss them out-of-hand.

We applaud Dr. Ford for her tremendous bravery in sharing her story. In doing so, she has faced death threats, the relocation of her family for their safety, the compromise of her personal information and e-mail accounts, and the condemnation of many who chose not to believe her even before having the opportunity to hear her full account. It is fundamental, therefore, that she not be subjected to questions and an environment that re-traumatizes her. Nearly 27 years ago, Anita Hill testified before your committee with allegations against another Supreme Court nominee. She encountered numerous questions that demeaned and impugned her character, cast doubt on her integrity, and forced her to repeatedly describe the harassment she experienced in graphic, humiliating detail. This cannot occur again. Dr. Ford has already faced significant pressure to meet the Senate's timetable for testifying. She was denied her request for a Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) investigation of her allegations, something that had been conducted prior to Professor Hill's testimony in 1991. As someone who risked so much to step forward as a survivor, Dr. Ford deserves greater accommodation in this process.

We bring to your attention the September 18th letter sent to you by the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. We firmly second their recommendation that you consult with experienced professionals in the field of sexual violence and trauma to develop a comprehensive, trauma-informed approach for the committee to implement in any hearing involving Dr. Ford, or any other survivors who may come forward and wish to testify.

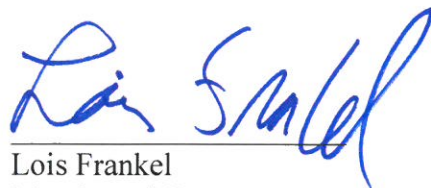
We have been incredibly heartened by the strength and resilience of survivors we have met through our work in Congress. Yet, trauma, and its manifestations over a survivor's lifetime, can be debilitatingly jarring and deeply engrained. Survivors of sexual violence are powerful, but we all share an obligation to ensure that they do not endure any more pain than they already have. In communities across the United States, those who survivors encounter after coming forward—prosecutors, law enforcement officers, emergency responders, healthcare providers, school administrators, and countless others—have been learning how to support these survivors by providing them with trauma-informed care. We therefore strongly urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to also undertake such a practice when engaging with Dr. Ford.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

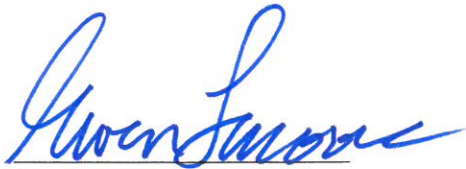
Sincerely,



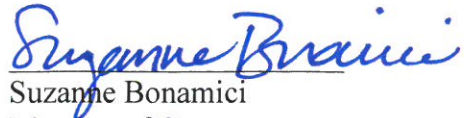
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



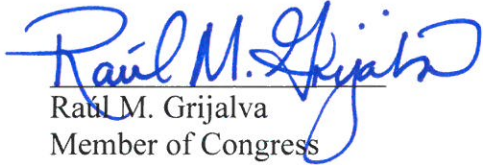
Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



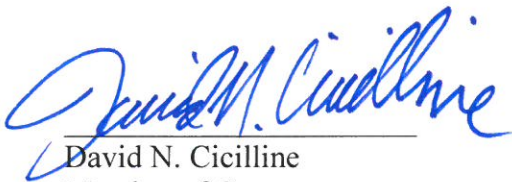
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



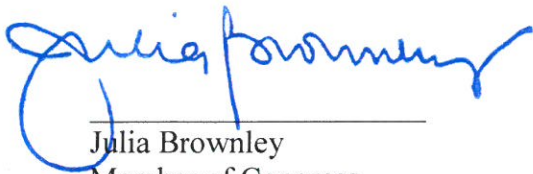
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



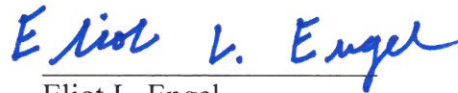
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



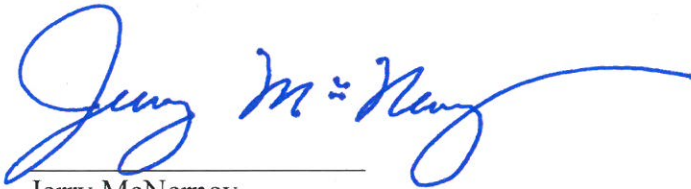
Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



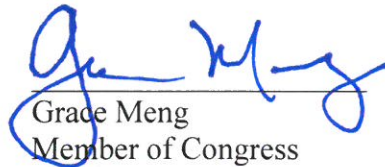
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



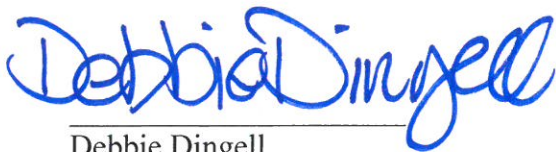
Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



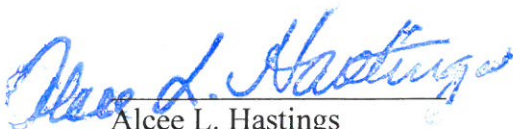
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



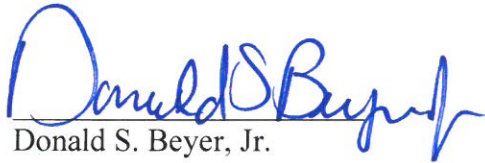
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



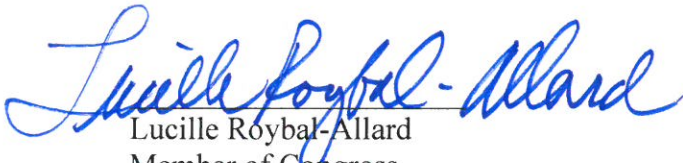
Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress



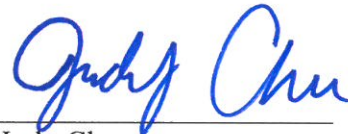
Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress